

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
MELBOURNE
MONDAY, 17 JULY 2017**

SUBJECTS: ADF's role combatting terrorism; homeland security

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: The events of this year, and indeed in recent years, have made it very plain and evident that we need to ensure our laws keep pace with the threats and the challenges that our nation faces.

Labor has always had a bipartisan instinct in terms of how we deal with updating our law. In recent years, we have supported a raft of legislation which has sought to make our law more robust in dealing with the challenges that our nation faces, and particularly when that involves terrorism.

In respect of the announcements that have been made by the Prime Minister this morning, Labor's attitude will be no different. There are a number of individual measures, such as the training of State forces by the ADF, the embedding of liaison officers, the pre-positioning of the ADF to deal with potential terrorist threats - all of this would appear to be uncontroversial. We have sought a briefing from the Government but I would expect we will fully support those measures.

In terms of the amendments to the Defence Act itself to deal with the call-out provisions of the ADF, we will be dealing with this in a bipartisan way. We have not yet seen the specifics of the legislation which is being proposed. We have asked that of the Government. We will work with the Government to ensure we come up with a bipartisan position for our country to deal with the threats that we face.

I point out that for more than a year now Labor has been raising the question as to whether or not the call-out provisions have been strong enough to deal with the various terrorism threats that our country faces. Our view has always been that at any moment in any crisis we should be bringing to bear the most potent capability that our country has, be that in a State police force, be that in the Federal Police or indeed be that in the ADF, and that our law ought to be flexible enough to allow that to occur and our law ought to support the greatest degree of coordination possible

between those agencies so that this can occur. We look forward to working with the Government to make this happen.

JOURNALIST: Would you consider supporting a department of homeland security [inaudible]?

MARLES: There has been a whole lot of commentary around about this. The issue here is that the case need to be made out by the Government in relation to this if this is the direction they want to go. Right now I haven't seen that case made out at all.

JOURNALIST: Do you think this latest change could result in Defence being the default responder to terrorism incidents when police might be a better place to go?

MARLES: As I understand what has been proposed by the Government today, and I hasten to say we have sought a briefing but are yet to have that, but from the statements that have been made by the Government, they have made it clear that the first responders will be State police and inevitably that is going to be the case. The State police are in the best position to deal with any threat which occurs in the moment.

The issue here is to make sure that there is the best possible coordination between all our agencies to bring to bear the most potent capability that Australia has in dealing with any incident, with any particular crisis that the country faces, and that our law enables that and supports that and we look forward to working with the Government to make sure our law can be put in that position.

JOURNALIST: [inaudible] should have happened a lot sooner?

MARLES: This is an evolving circumstance, but I would point out that we have, Labor has, been asking this question for a year now, about whether or not our call-out provisions are strong enough to deal with the threats that our country faces. What matters is, going forward, that we get our law into the position it needs to be so it has the flexibility in it to allow for whatever is our best capability to be brought to bear on any given moment.

JOURNALIST: Do you think it was appropriate for the Government to use commandos in their announcement, particularly given their need for anonymity?

MARLES: I haven't seen the images from this morning. I would make a couple of points.

Firstly, the anonymity of our special forces is absolutely paramount and that always needs to be preserved.

More generally, there is a fine line between acknowledging and celebrating the incredible work that our Defence Force personnel do on the one hand and politicising them on the other. As public officials in this space, we must always ensure we never politicise the ADF. I think the Australian people can well see a prop when it is presented. They can sniff it from a mile away and they will judge people accordingly, and it is for all of us in this space to use our judgement appropriately to make sure

that we are doing this in a way which is respectful to the ADF because I can assure you, the Australian people will absolutely judge our actions, as indeed they should.

JOURNALIST: So, does having them there politicise the ADF?

MARLES: It is a fine line here, and the Australian people will absolutely make their judgement.

Thank you.

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